

NC Tomato Sandwich

I love a good ole tomato sandwich when North Carolina Tomatoes are in season. You just know summer is here. I know some of you are thinking who doesn't know how to fix a tomato sandwich here in NC but people are moving here from all over and they may not of had the enjoyment yet. Here is the basic idea with lots of options to jazz it up

- 1 large ripe NC Tomato
- 1 Tablespoon mayonnaise (I use Duke's light)
- 2 slices of fresh soft bread
- Salt and Pepper

Slice the tomato to your desired thickness. Put mayo on each slice of bread. Place one or two slices on your bread. Salt and Pepper the tomato then cover with the other slice of bread.

Options:

- BLT: Bacon, Lettuce and NC Tomato – It's a classic
- TVO: NC Tomato with a slice of Vidalia onion or purple onion if you prefer – Delicious
- TLC: NC Tomato with Lettuce and Cucumber – soak your cucumber slices in vinegar
- BT: Basil, and NC Tomato – Fresh

These are just a few suggestions. You can mix and match whatever you like or have in the refrigerator. Be creative, surprise yourself and your family. Set out a variety of ingredients and let everyone make their own sandwich. Lunch doesn't have to be the same old thing. As long as you use a homegrown NC tomato, it will be delicious!

Open Faced Tomato Sandwich

- Bagels or English muffins
- NC Tomatoes – whole or Roma
- Mayonnaise
- Muenster Cheese

This is great for Breakfast or lunch. Put a little mayo on your choice of bread. Peel and slice your tomatoes and add as many as you prefer. Add salt and pepper. Then top with slices of Muenster cheese. Put under the broiler until the cheese is melted. I prefer Muenster because when it melts it is a very creamy cheese.

Tomato and Cucumber Salad

- 2 cups diced NC Tomatoes (whole, Roma, Cherry or Grape)
- 1 cup diced cucumbers peeled
- ¼ cup sliced scallions
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- 2 Tablespoons red wine vinegar

Combine your tomatoes, cucumbers and scallions. Mix your mayonnaise, sugar and red wine vinegar until the sugar is dissolved. Pour over your vegetables to coat and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. Stir before serving.

This is a cold crisp side dish that is quick and easy. This is a great addition to any meal.

Stuffed Tomatoes

6 NC Tomatoes
1 ½ cups bread crumbs
¼ cup minced scallions (green onions)
¼ cup minced fresh basil
2 Tablespoons minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
2 teaspoons minced garlic (2 cloves)
½ teaspoon minced fresh thyme leaves
1 tsp. Salt
¼ tsp. Pepper
½ cup grated cheese of your choice (I recommend Mozzarella, Parmesan or Gruyere)
Olive Oil
Optional: To make this a main dish, add ½ pound ground beef already cooked.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Cut the cores from the tomatoes, removing as little as possible. Cut them in half crosswise and, with your fingers, remove the seeds and juice. Place the tomato halves in a baking dish.

In a bowl, combine the breadcrumbs, scallions, basil, parsley, garlic, thyme, and 1 teaspoons of salt and ¼ teaspoon of pepper (Optional: Hamburger). Sprinkle the tomato halves generously with salt and pepper. With your hands, fill the cavities and cover the tops of the tomatoes with the breadcrumb mixture. Bake the tomatoes for 15 minutes, or until they are tender. Sprinkle with the cheese, drizzle with olive oil, and bake for 30 seconds more. Serve hot or at room temperature.

I love Ina Garten, Barefoot Contessa and this recipe is similar to hers. I just made some adjustments so my entire family would enjoy a good homegrown NC Tomato. When fixing this as a meal with the hamburger, simply add a salad and some tater tots for the kids and you have a wonderful light summer meal for the family.

Summer Pasta with Tomatoes and Basil

1 package polka kielbasa
1 jar spicy tomato basil pasta sauce
¼ cup heavy cream
1 box penne pasta
½ yellow onion diced
2 cloves garlic minced
2 spring onions chopped
3 squash or zucchini diced
1 cup grape tomatoes halved
Fresh mozzarella cubed
Fresh basil chopped
Parmesan cheese

Sauté polka kielbasa in 2 tablespoons olive oil. Cook pasta in salted water until al dente and then drain. Warm the pasta sauce with the heavy cream. Remove kielbasa and sauté the onions (both) and garlic with S&P until translucent. Add squash or zucchini with more S&P until tender. Add the kielbasa, pasta, sauce, tomatoes, basil and mozzarella and toss to combine. Top with Parmesan cheese.

This is a Spicy dish with a great mix of color and flavors.

Tomato Breakfast Casserole

1 lb. Sausage
2 ½ cups NC Tomatoes chopped
6 green onions chopped
2 cups Mozzarella cheese shredded
12 eggs
1 cup milk
1 ¼ cups Bisquick
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp pepper
½ tsp dried oregano

Brown the sausage and drain off the grease. Put into a 9 X 13 casserole dish that has been greased. Then layer with tomatoes, onions and cheese. Blend the eggs, milk, Bisquick, salt, pepper and oregano. Pour over your layered ingredients and bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes. You may substitute other herbs for the oregano depending on the flavor you prefer. I suggest trying basil, parsley or cilantro.

Tomato Skewer Appetizer

Who doesn't love a quick easy appetizer that is fresh for the summer? It doesn't get any easier than this and you will love how it looks and tastes.

1 pint NC grape Tomatoes
Fresh Basil
Fresh Mozzarella (these are packed in water as individual balls or you can find one large ball and you can cut it to your desired amount)
Wooden skewers
Olive Oil
Salt and Pepper

Simply wash and pat dry your tomatoes and basil. Then make your skewers with one tomato, one basil leaf, one chunk of fresh mozzarella or a mozzarella ball. Arrange your skewers on a platter and drizzle with olive oil and salt and pepper. It's that simple. I've done this for large parties and small family gatherings and it is always a hit.